

I-90 Snoqualmie Pass East Preferred Alternative – Virtual Open House
June 20, 2006 5:30 pm – 8:00 pm
Question and Answer Session

This is a **transcript** of the question and answer session conducted during the virtual open house. In some cases, WSDOT was forced to limit answers due to text length restrictions. For additional information, please visit the [I-90 Snoqualmie Pass East homepage](#) to view project displays, questions/answers, and a project design concept video.

Q: What kinds of delays are expected for this project?

A: We will try to keep the four lanes of roadway open, and possible delays would only be expected during the middle of the night, during off peak hours.

Q: Are toll booths going to be used?

A: The 2005 legislative session funded this 5 mile section of I-90 so toll roads will not be used for this first section.

Q: How are you going to address the safer crossings for wildlife?

A: Longer bridges on stream crossings for animals to cross and two additional wildlife bridges.

Q: What will the design speed limit be for the completed section?

A: Design speed will be 75 but the posted speed will remain 65.

Q: Is there any chance the State might start construction before 2010?

A: The legislature asked WSDOT to look at that; we are looking at a possible construction start date in 2009.

Q: Are you going to actually tell us what alternative you're going to use?

A: Yes, it will be announced during the presentation that starts at 6pm.

Q: What is it you are actually going to do to make it safer for wildlife crossing the highway?

A: We will take a landscape level approach which incorporates the resource needs within an individual watershed into our design. This concept includes how to avoid and minimize impacts to wetlands, streams, and habitats. This includes wildlife bridges.

Q: How many sections will there be?

A: Currently, one five mile corridor is funded. Ten miles is unfunded that could be constructed in two or more segments.

Q: How many years will the 1st phase take to construct?

A: The first 5 mile section will take 4 or 5 years to build.

Q: Are special considerations going to be made for special events happening (Apple Cup, Concerts, etc.)?

A: Absolutely; we will attempt to keep four lanes open during all peak traffic periods. We have made a firm commitment to reducing impacts to traffic.

Q: For those that have previous road construction experience (flaggers, pilot car operators, equipment operators, etc), who is the contractor going to be and who should be contacted for potential employment?

A: The construction is scheduled to start in 2010; we will put the contract out for bids and award it to a contractor, and will announce the winning bidder at that time.

Q: How will DOT deal with the possibility of contamination to the lake due to snow and ice management?

A: WSDOT is committed to meeting the state regulatory and legal standards that have been set for water quality and runoff quantities. To be able to do this, we will design our project to department of ecology standards.

Q: How many accidents are really caused by animals? Do you have real numbers?

A: WSDOT has been tracking large animal vehicle collisions since the late 1990s. The problem is it is hard to tell exact numbers at this time because there is no good way to track smaller animal collisions. We are developing a monitoring plan to address this.

Q: It doesn't appear the federal government is helping with the funding. Please explain why they do not assist in projects like this.

A: Your federal tax dollars are returned to the states. These dollars are used for other very important project within the State of WA such as preserving pavements and bridge repairs. Large improvement projects such as this are typically our responsibility.

Q: Why is it that the federal government is not willing to assist with the funding when I-90 is not just specific to Washington State?

A: The federal government was instrumental in the original construction of I-90. Federal dollars now are used by the state for various roadway needs. Projects of this nature exceed available federal dollars.

Q: How will the bridges be built in such a remote location?

A: Everything will have to be hauled up to the construction site by truck.

Q: Why don't they just build a heater road?

A: We do not have the technology available at a reasonable cost at this time

Q: Why don't they make a toll like 20 per truck and 4 per car? Trucks use that road more than cars it looks like

A: The Transportation Commission is currently studying tolls for different applications throughout the state. I-90 Snoqualmie Pass is a location they are evaluating tolls at this time to fund maintenance and construction.

Q: Why is I-90 getting all this money; there are more projects that need funding like the bridges in Seattle?

A: SR 520 and SR 99 were two large projects that received funding through the new gas tax as well. I-90 is a critical east-west corridor route for Washington State with significance to both sides of the state as well as beyond the boundaries of WA State.

Q: How many different designs did the I-90 Wildlife Bridge Coalition go through before finalizing this design?

A: The Bridge Coalition did not develop the designs but rather provided input to WSDOT who worked with other state agencies to finalize the design.

Q: Why is the project only going from Hyak to Easton and not the Summit to Ellensburg or the Summit to Cle Elum?

A: This is the most problematic 15 mile stretch of the 40 mile I-90 corridor from Hyak to Ellensburg. There are more problems with pavement deterioration and operation within this 15 mile stretch. Long range plans will evaluate the remaining corridor.

Q: What steps will be taken to protect extended wildlife corridors in the Easton area where there is currently a developer planning a cluster development of approximately 225 homes in the wildlife corridor as it extends northeast from the planned crossings?

A: We are trying to address wildlife and landscape/watershed investments in areas that can be protected for the life of the structure. In the case of bridges, this could be for 75 years or more. Where development pressure is higher, investments will be lower; we try to line up our more expensive structures with public land and high quality habitat.

Q: You were able to keep the design speed at 75 without using tunnels? Is there a possibility the speed limit might be raised to 70 when the entire project is completed to Easton? Also, what about extension of the variable speed limit section?

A: There are a few locations where we will not be able to achieve a 75 mph design speed within the project so it is unlikely we will raise the speed limit. We do intend to extend the variable speed limit section to Easton but not as part of the first project.

Q: Will you have a way to gather feedback on this event?

A: Yes, immediately following the presentation we will have a survey poll panel available in the bottom right corner of the screen

Q: Why don't they make 10 lanes all the way from Seattle to Spokane; makes it easier for people to get over there faster?

A: The traffic projections that we have modeled for the next 25 years justify three lanes in each direction with auxiliary lanes in each direction when necessary such as truck climbing lanes. Ten lanes from Seattle to Spokane is well beyond the project budget.

Q: Why is the design speed limit going to be 75 and not 70??

A: We are very constrained by the terrain of a mountain pass, so we try to design the new roadway for 10 mph above the posted speed limit to maintain the current speed limit

Q: Why don't they make a tunnel all the way over the mountains?

A: Very expensive. It is only needed at certain times during the year. Tunnels have unique operational issues especially one with great length; i.e. fire suppression, hazardous materials, etc.

Q: Has there been any thought to adding rest areas to replace those at Price Creek that were never finished (but have been used as a sno park)?

A: The Price Creek rest area westbound will be removed and replaced within the project corridor. We are looking at potential locations for additional rest areas, but we will be looking at Snoqualmie Pass as a whole, including areas outside the project limits

Q: Is there going to be more cops posted now when the speed limit goes up?

A: The posted speed limit is not going to change. The design speed is typically 10 mph higher than the actual legal posted speed limit.

Q: What safety elements (roadway temperature sensors, reader boards, sno-parks/rest areas, etc.) are going to be added as part of this project?

A: Roadway temperature sensors and reader boards, as well as traffic cameras will be part of the project.

Q: Please turn on the polling option.

A: Polling option has been turned on; please fill out our interactive survey with comments and suggestions about the event.

Q: Audio mikes are essential for questions for the audience to be heard.

A: Thank you. This will be addressed at future events.

Q: Thanks for letting us listen in!

A: You're welcome; we look forward to hosting more of these interactive events in the future

Q: Have you thought about adding a rubber compound to the new concrete to make it last longer and be quieter? Also if a toll is imposed, where are they planning on putting it and will there be discount for property owners on the pass?

A: Concrete mix design options are being considered. Life span of the concrete is an important consideration. At this point, there are no specifics on tolls; just a general statewide toll study.

Q: One suggestion for next time is to have the presenters showing the drafts and plans via PowerPoint or other multimedia so that we can follow along to what is being said.

A: Good suggestion; thanks!

Q: What kind of concrete is going to be put down on this project?

A: Concrete mix designs are being considered; life span is the most important factor.

Q: Will the project impact how much water Keechelus Lake holds?

A: No, this project will not impact the storage capacity of the reservoir.

Q: I asked a question about the exact numbers of accidents caused by animals and it appears that you evaded the question by your answer. If you have at least large animal/vehicle collision numbers, can you share them with the public?

A: With requests for specifics, we would like to provide exact numbers to you. If you would like to submit a question via email, we will respond within a week with numbers.

Q: What alignment is proposed for Slide Curve? I worked on that section in the 70s.

A: We are looking at staying near the existing alignment and pushing the alignment near the Snow shed into the lake onto a bridge.

Q: How many web users are the maximum that your system will accommodate as configured? How much higher could this go? Will WA Trans. Comm. start web casting its meetings?

A: The web users are limited by the amount of funding available for the webcast. The Trans Comm. may look into using this interactive forum.

Q: Thanks for this format. I will look at the displays after the speaker is finished.

A: Thank you for joining us for this event. WSDOT looks forward to hosting additional live events in the future

Q: Is this still going on?

A: Yes, we are here. Please submit any questions

Q: Is the 6 lanes going to stop at the bottom of the hill, or is it going to go to the exit. If you have to stop going down hill there is going to be a lot of crashes. You know what I am asking?

A: It will continue to the exit and transition back to four lanes. WSDOT would also like to fund extending the six laning to Cle Elum.

Q: Will construction go beyond the normal workday of 8 hours? Will you add more shifts to get the project completed faster?

A: Typically, contractors work more than one shift. This project is located in an area that has a short construction season and we will look at night work and trying to optimize that season. Ultimately, the project will be bid on by a private contractor.

Q: Anyone there?

A: Yes, please feel free to send in a question. And we would really like to hear your comments on this event in order to improve them in the future. Please take a minute to fill out the 6 questions below. Thank you.

Q: Charlie Raines is a member of the Sierra Club; why are we spending so many \$ on Wildlife Bridges for this project when we could be spending it on people (health care, reduce tax burden, etc). The wildlife bridges are a far left idea from the wildlands project. Also, how many \$ are being spent on the wildlife bridges? Thank You.

A: WSDOT is determining how much the bridges will cost. In some areas, we will have to build the bridges to accommodate clean water issues and wetland impacts. Bridges and structures currently estimated at \$116 million dollars.

Q: If tolls are required, which I support, will there be a charge to get to the ski resort, or only those that drive all the way through?

A: This is a question that has yet to be answered, but an issue that will be addressed. There are several open houses across the state which WSDOT encourages you to attend regarding these issues. www.watollingstudy.gov is the best source of information.

Q: The amount being spent on just wildlife bridges is the \$116 million dollars you spoke about?

A: \$116 million dollars includes the wildlife bridges as well as the other structures that could possibly be constructed along the corridor.

Q: Is there any open houses coming up in central or eastern Washington?

A: Would you like to attend a live or virtual event in the future?

Q: Live open house in central or eastern!

A: Are you comfortable telling us what city you are in? We would like to plan future events where there is interest.

Q: I live in Coulee City -- Moses Lake or Spokane would work.

A: Thank you for your response. WSDOT hosted an I-90 event in Spokane in January 2006. We are evaluating future events and locations in eastern WA. Did you attend the event in Spokane?

Q: No - One of the problems is that not everybody is familiar with this project. Where do advertise it?

A: Project is advertised on the WSDOT web page, newspapers, radio, and other sources. Where would you like to see advertising so WSDOT may adjust our strategy?

Q: I read the Spokesman Review out of Spokane but did not see the information. Sending this to farm org/business groups and etc would give you a wider base to draw from.

A: The event was advertised in the Spokesman Review a week before the event. We will explore extending our advertising to cover multiple days leading up to future events. We agree that an agriculture-specific mailing or advertisement would reach your group.

Q: Please e-mail me in reference to a new event on this side of the state. I received the paper mailer one day before this event; I may have traveled that far if I had more notice.

A: We would be happy to add you to our Spokane Regional email notification list. Thank you for taking the time to inquire.

Q: How many people attended the I-90 Snoqualmie Pass East Preferred Alternative Open House in person?

A: About 90 people attended the event in person.

Q: Of the 90 people attending - Were they mainly from environmental organizations or do you know?

A: It was a cross section of the community, environmental organizations, citizens from Cle Elum, Easton, as far away as Moses Lake, State Representatives, Legislative staffers, and other community members.

Q: Can you please explain the \$4 Toll Booth threat. Ss any one thinking about those us who live in the Pass (or we going to be held prisoner by Toll Booths) during these "Tolling" conversations?

A: Conversations are taking place about tolling but to date; there have been no official proposals for tolling on I-90.

Q: How much longer will you be online answering live questions? This has been great!

A: We will conclude this event in 8 minutes; please submit any final questions soon. Thank you for attending the event.